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ABSTRACT

This study examined the racial dynamics of the undergraduate social system of fraternities and sororities. The study sought to determine: (1) how white student participation in social fraternities and sororities was influenced by racial dynamics, (2) under what conditions students of color were accepted by the dominant peer group, (3) what types of students of color participate in these organizations, and (4) what this suggests about racial identity. Data for the study were derived from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program database on over 300,000 students. The first stage of the analysis compared patterns of participation between students of color and white students; the findings here indicated that such organizations remain predominantly "white social clubs." Regression analyses in the second stage examined the predictive values of specific variables such as student background, institutional characteristics, and student self-reported attitudes for both white students and students of color. Among findings were that campus racial climate influenced student participation in such social organizations, with racial conflict on campus enhancing white students' joining, whereas campuses committed to diversity had a negative effect on white student participation. Five tables summarize data for participation rates for a freshman cohort, three groups of variable predictors, and participation rates for students of color. (Contains 55 references.) (CH)

**Race Identity and Race Relations in Higher Education:
Fraternity and Sorority Membership Among Students of Color**

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A paper presented at the 1995 ASHE National Conference

Research Paper

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This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held in Memphis, Tennessee, October 31 - November 3, 1996. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

"Diversifying fraternities rests upon the shared convictions of a society and not upon coercive measure. You cannot legislate ideas and prejudices out of the minds and hearts of men."

—— James R. Killian, Jr., former President of M.I.T

in an keynote address at a 1955 conference of national social fraternities

Introduction

Social scientists dating back to Rousseau, Durkheim, and Dewey have portrayed educational systems as cultural signatures. They believe that societies organize their educational systems to achieve the goal of creating good citizens to participate fully in the life of that society. Thus, to understand a culture's schools is to understand that culture. If education is a reflection of the broader society, then examining the college/university atmosphere will provide us with insight into American culture as well as higher education.

Not only do colleges and universities reflect the broader society through the education they provide, they are also expected to solve societal problems. In these responsibilities, the U.S. system of higher education has zealously responded by leading the world in scholarship and research. The United States system of higher education is considered the most effective the world has ever known (Kerr, 1994). No other system of higher education has ever performed, all around, so well. As a result, institutions of higher education serve as role models for the nation and for the world to follow.

However, colleges and universities are currently buried in what Altbach (1991) described as a "racial crisis." Rather than provide society with a positive model for *race relations*, our institutions of higher education reflect the problems of our nation. This is not to say that higher education has neglected issues surrounding *race*; in fact it is quite the opposite. There have been numerous institutional programs and research projects since *Brown v. Board of Education* that address the social fabric of our nation. Yet given all the energy and time devoted to addressing

race, our educational system continues to spiral toward a greater state of racial crisis (Colon, 1991). Perhaps the limitations of this research legacy is not why we address race, which seems quite obvious since issues of equity and access are important in a democratic society, but how we conduct studies in this area.

Progressive liberal scholars have argued that race is a socially constructed concept that has psychological (Roman, 1993), ideological (Takaki, 1979), political (Omi & Winant, 1986) and economic (Wilson, 1978) dimensions and consequences. They also find traditional methods of categorizing race inadequate because such categorizations fail to capture the instability and the complexities of race and racial politics (Omi & Winant, 1993) and therefore limit the effectiveness for addressing the widening pattern of racial animosity demonstrated across the country. To compensate for these shortcomings, one of the recommendations put forth by these scholars is to explore unique social contexts that capture the dynamics of race.

To this end, this study examines the racial dynamics (*race identity & race relations*) of the undergraduate social Greek system, composed of social fraternities and sororities. Greek organizations have found themselves in a precarious position amid the emergence of multi-racial/multi-cultural campuses. They have been severely criticized for contributing to racial intolerance. Their deleterious effects on college environments are well documented and have generated a great deal of controversy (Bryan, 1987; Trager, 1992). Fraternities and sororities are criticized for exclusion of members based on race, ethnicity and socioeconomic class (Maisel, 1990). Additionally, Greek members are often portrayed by social scientists as "typical perpetrators" of insensitivity, adding to the racial controversy on campus (Altbach, 1991; Hacker, 1992; and Takagi, 1992). This paper will extend this argument in following sections, that Greek organizations indeed provide a unique social context to examine racial dynamics.

In studying Greek-lettered social fraternities and sororities, this study focuses on students of color who participated in these social organizations. Since these groups have historically discriminated against students of color, the participation of students of color may inform us about

"race relations" and the institutions and peer groups that play such an important role in the construction of "racial identity." Furthermore, Greek organizations and their members can help us better understand how popular forms of racism are produced, maintained, and reproduced, on the one hand, and resisted, challenged, and rearticulated, on the other. This study also challenges assumptions about race and racial groups, attempting to address conceptual limitations of previous research.

Race Identity and Race Relations

One of the most fundamental questions in this study concerns what is meant by race, since how race is defined and how racial differences are interpreted have direct impact on the solutions and policies we propose. This section defines how the terms "racial identity" and "race relations" are understood in this study. It is important to clarify the terms since this usage also describes the framework used to investigate individual and institutional conditions that are affected by racial dynamics.¹

At the micro or individual level, race is experienced by ways in which one forms a conception of self and society in practical, everyday activity. Race structures the practical activity of everyday life by shaping ways in which one understands him/herself and interacts with others (Omi & Winant, 1986). Scholars refer to this conception as **racial identity**. One's experiences or identity, however, are not reducible to only race but is related to and always overlaps with other forms of identity such as gender, class, or sexual orientation (McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993). Thus, racial identity cannot be thought of as fixed nor monolithic but should be considered fluid, multivocal, and even contradictory.

Moreover, one's sense of self, expressed as racial identity, will always be situated within parameters, a space of meanings, that are already socially established. On the one hand, identity like ideology is never only passively received but is also constructed and reconstructed by people responding to their material and cultural circumstances (Gramsci, 1971; Freire, 1984). On the

¹ How race is operationalized in this study will be discussed in detail in the methods section.

other hand, identity develops within patterns of one's culture, society and social group. In short, racial identity in both its individual and collective forms must be understood as a dynamic relationship between the individual and society, in which its construction and development are linked to the way one is socially represented (i.e. racial stereotypes) and to one's processes of self-representation (personal strategies).

At the collective level, the nature, development and persistence of racial identity enhances its importance as meaningful social groupings in contemporary society. The social significance of these group identities—that is, how these groupings are related to social stratification, to socio-cultural relations, and to the political and economic dynamics in a society, can be referred to as **race relations**. In other words, race relations is not understood as the interaction between individuals of different racial groupings (Allport, 1954) or as a process of conflict and eventual assimilation into dominant society (Gordon, 1964; Park, 1950). Rather, it is understood as the relationships between groups that are organized under a fundamental principle of social relationships, which are established by racial stereotypes and *common sense* beliefs (see Omi & Winant, 1986).

Studying our nation's campuses can supply insight into race identity and race relations, which can then be applied to a larger context. In particular, social Greek organizations furnish a unique context to investigate these important social issues.

Greek Organizations

As colleges and universities continue to address issues of equity, diversity, and tolerance in a heavily "racialized climate" (Altbach & Lomotey, 1991, Peterson, et al., 1978), one wonders what role Greek organizations will play or whether they will even have a role to play in the future of higher education. Surprisingly, these concerns were also expressed by Lee (1955), who described Greek organizations' discriminatory membership practices and racially offensive rituals in the 1950's when higher education was still struggling with desegregation. He questioned the

role fraternities and sororities play in educational communities that value democratic practices. Unfortunately, both Lee's social concerns and his description of Greek organizations forty years ago are not far removed from contemporary ones.

The allegations against fraternities and sororities should not come as a surprise since they are, after all, products of a society that has struggled for decades to recognize and correct its oppressive traditions. Furthermore, most Greek systems operate within racially homogeneous colleges and universities. Before the Civil Rights movement, most historically white national fraternities and sororities had constitutional stipulations or covenants prohibiting membership of nonwhites (Johnson, 1972; Lee, 1955). A 1963 federal law required all Greek organizations to abstain from discrimination on the basis of race. Yet despite civil rights initiatives that tore down *de jure* racial barriers, many Greek organizations resisted these laws and continue to practice "informal segregation" and rigid membership restrictions (Maisel, 1990). Today, historically white organizations are still predominantly composed of white members (Whipple et. al., 1991) and allegedly "self-segregatory" (Duster, 1993).

Supporters of Greek societies argue that these social organizations have reinvented themselves, finding a way to accommodate a more racially heterogeneous student population, while continuing to maintain their traditions of "brotherhood" or "sisterhood" (Johnson, 1972). Indeed, students of color are granted membership to fraternities and sororities that once excluded them because of skin color. Additionally, Greek organizations that cater to the identity and needs of underrepresented racial groups have emerged on colleges and universities. African American social Greek societies, which were formed in 1906, currently have over 4,500 chapters on more than 1,200 campuses across the nation (McKee, 1987). Likewise Asian American and Latino Greek letter organizations have become more popular in the last two decades.

Supporters also contend that fraternities and sororities as formal peer groups enhance students' college experiences. Research on student organizations report that formal peer groups play a significant role in the collegiate experiences of students and that they are associated with

multiple educational outcomes (Abramowicz, 1988; Astin, 1977; Bennett, 1952; Strifflino & Saunders, 1989). Participation in student organizations are positively associated with the development of leadership (Astin, 1977; Hillison, 1984; Roberts & Ullom, 1989) and other important educational and life skills (Brechtner, 1979; Kuh & Lyons, 1990; Williams & Winston, 1985). Thus, formal student peer groups such as social Greek organizations, can play a potentially positive role in the education and development of undergraduates.

Although the effects of fraternity and sorority membership are not conclusive (Pike & Askew, 1990; Winston & Saunders, 1987), some empirical evidence suggests that Greeks are very homogeneous; members share a common set of beliefs, values, behaviors and attitudes, often developed prior to entering college (Baier and Whipple, 1990; Marlowe & Auvenshine, 1982; Wilder et. al., 1978, 1986). The typical profile of a fraternity or sorority member is white, politically conservative, coming from an affluent family, status oriented and less committed to promoting racial understanding (Astin, 1977, 1993). Moreover, Greek life offers a slimmer chance of meeting people of diverse races, religions, and ethnicities (Malaney, 1990). Participation in a fraternity or sorority among white students is negatively associated with cross-race interaction, indicating that these organizations may be somewhat homogeneous and exclusionary (Hurtado, Dey, & Treviño, 1994). This may subsequently perpetuate an intolerance of people with different likes, dislikes, ethnicities, economic status, or cultural backgrounds (Maisel, 1990).

In short, the literature does suggest that "race" plays an important role in the dynamics of these complex social organizations, despite inconclusive findings regarding the effects of Greek participation. Race appears to be a significant determinant of participation. Additionally, Greek lettered societies contribute to the racial climate on campus, either as a consequence of existing racial conditions or as an instigator of intolerance. Since institutions of higher education are important social systems that both reflect and contribute to individual and societal understanding of

race, this particular setting provides a unique context to explore the concept of race and the issues that revolve around it.

A few studies have examined the role race plays in Greek letter societies. These studies compared membership in African American Greek organizations to membership in mainstream Greek organizations. Indeed, differences exist between these two organizational types. Compared to white fraternity men, black fraternity men are more liberal, socially conscious, culturally sophisticated (Fox et. al., 1987), academically motivated, peer independent, and come from a lower socioeconomic background (Whipple et. al., 1990). Moreover, the two organizational types differ in their general purposes, in that traditionally black Greek organizations have been important links both to the heritage and future of African American students, providing the major social structure for members and non-members alike (McKee, 1987). Although this body of research investigates issues of race, it neglects to address those students of color who joined historically white social organizations. Insight into students of color who joined fraternities and sororities can inform research on race relations and race identity, especially as it pertains to higher education.

Objective

The alleged tradition, environment and membership profiles of mainstream Greek societies make it a unique context to expand and challenge existing literature on "racial identity" and "race relations." Specifically, this exploratory study examines predictors of student participation in a college fraternity or sorority and focuses on two sets of research questions. One set attempts to explain the parameters of race relations, whereas another set attempts to describe a unique group of students. Firstly, do racial dynamics influence white student participation in social fraternities and sororities? Secondly, under what conditions are racial lines in Greek organizations more fluid? That is, under what conditions are students of color accepted into the formal peer groups of the dominant group? These insights into the racial dynamics of historically white social groups may inform us about race relations. Lastly, what type of students, particularly students of color,

participate in these organizations and what do these findings suggest about racial identity? This study addresses these questions in an effort to expand the understanding of race relations and race identity in higher education so that we may improve strategies for educational reform.

Method

Data Source

The empirical aspect of the study utilized the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) database of college students. CIRP is a continuing program of data collection and research that is sponsored by the American Council on Education and the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. This longitudinal database is the most comprehensive collection of information on higher education, and is designed to assess the impact of college on students.

The data used in this study are primarily composed of information drawn from two surveys; the 1985 Student Information Form (SIF; see Astin, Panos, & Creager, 1966) and the 1989 Follow-up Survey (FUS). The 1985 SIF was administered to college freshmen during orientation programs and in the first few weeks of fall classes. Four years later, a sample of the 1985 SIF respondents also completed the 1989 FUS. The information collected from the two surveys were linked to form a database that is designed to assess a wide-range of student experiences and undergraduate achievements and to provide longitudinal data for studying how different college environments influence student development. The data used in this study contains a sample of over 300,000 students from 365 four-year colleges and universities across the country. In addition to these student information, structural characteristics of the institutions attended by each respondent in our sample were added to the file using U.S. Dept. of Education IPEDS data, and information on the campus climate, derived from responses to the 1989 HERI Faculty Survey (Astin, Korn, & Dey, 1990).

Research Design

This study used the Input-Environment-Outcome (I-E-O) methodological framework, developed by Astin (1991), for assessing student change. According to Astin, the impact of various environmental effects (college characteristics) on specific student outcomes (cognitive or affective development) is best observed after controlling for student input characteristics (students' characteristics measured at the point of college entry). Astin recommends using blocked stepwise regression analysis to control for input effects that may confound the interpretation of environmental influences. This method, he holds, allows for a more valid account of college impact on a specific student outcome.

Operationalizing race was somewhat of a challenge. On one hand, the study recognizes the problems with traditional racial categories (McCarthy & Crichtlow, 1993), described earlier in the paper. On the other hand, abandoning racial categories would overlook the oppressive consequences resulting from phenotypic distinctions of "otherness" (skin color). Additionally, the nature of the data source makes it necessary to objectify race and therefore to objectify the groups of interest. After considering these limitations, race was investigated in terms of white students and students of color. Distinguishing racial differences in this manner emphasizes the power dynamics of dominant vs. sub-dominant groups (Willie, 1981). The assumption here is that whiteness occupies a position of privilege and confers upon whites (both individually and collectively) cultural, political, and economic power (Roman, 1993). As a result, students of color occupy a different position as compared to their white counterparts and are believed to share similar experiences in a racialized society. For example, students of color, whether it be African American, Asian American, Latino, etc., share experiences of historical discrimination/exclusion and share experiences of being a minority in a white majority society. While categorizing race in this fashion does not compensate for all the limitations associated with objectifying or essentializing race, drawing attention to the shared racial dynamic among students of color rather

than accentuating differences between groups, can help uncover the multiple identities within a race.

Data Analysis

The first stage of analysis attempts to characterize the social Greek organizations in our sample. A series of crosstabulations and simple correlations were conducted to compare patterns of participation and actual participation between students of color and white students.

In the second stage of analysis, Astin's I-E-O framework was implemented to investigate the contributions of Input (student background), Environment (institutional characteristics) and Intermediate Outcome variables (student self-reported attitudes, values, and behaviors) in predicting actual student participation in a social fraternity or sorority (see Astin, 1993: *What Matters in College* for a detailed description of these variables). The dependent variable was surveyed in the 1989 FUS. Respondents indicated "No" or "Yes" to whether they were a member of a fraternity or sorority. For the purpose of this study, only students who attended a predominantly white co-ed campus with a social Greek system were included in the sample. Separate regression analyses were conducted for white students ($n=11810$) and students of color (African American, Latinos, and Asian Americans; $n=1190$). Given the large differences in group sizes between white students and students of color, a more liberal definition of significance is used for students of color ($p<.05$), while a more stringent criterion is used for the white student sample ($p<.001$). Although all students of color are aggregated into one category, the specific racial identification of the student is statistically controlled in the regression analysis. The independent variables were entered in the prediction equation in a stepwise fashion in which blocks were determined by the nature of the variables.

The first block, *Input* variables, used in the regression analysis are measures of student background characteristics identified at the point of entry to college. This block of variables

include standard demographics characteristics, and SIF items (1985) that measure student predispositions that include behavior, high school activities, goals, beliefs, and values.

The *Environmental* variables, which measures college environment, make up the second block of regression variables. This block includes standard institutional characteristics of size, type, and control. Additionally, *campus climate* measures and *peer group* measures were also included among the Environmental variables. These measures, based on either the faculty views of each institution's climate and its priorities (campus climate) or the students' views and behaviors at each institution (peer group), were derived through a factor analysis of data (see Astin, 1993). Of particular interest in this block of variables are those that measure an institution's racial composition, structural diversity, and racial climate.

The final block of independent variables, *Intermediate Outcomes*, in the multivariate analysis measures students' direct involvement and experiences with their environment. These items were collected by the 1989 FUS and are designed to examine within-college variations in the students' experiences, whereas the previous set of Environmental variables focused on between-college variations. It is important to note that these variables were measured at the same time as the dependent variable. Consequently, the interpretation of these variables must be done with care in that it is impossible to clearly establish any causal ordering among these variables. Despite this limitation, these items are informative in that they reveal within college variations toward joining a Greek organization.

Limitations

Several limitations must be remembered when interpreting the results presented in the next section. The limitations with objectifying race have already been noted in a previous section, and attempts to rectify some of these shortcomings are addressed in the methodology.

Another substantive concern is the participation of students of color in alternative fraternities or sororities that accentuate the racial or ethnic backgrounds of its members. For

example, it is unclear whether an African American student who reported to have joined a Greek organization while in college, participated in either a black Greek lettered society or a historically white one. To address this concern, several cross-tabs were conducted on students of color in the sample. In short, the findings indicate that those students of color who became social Greek members, as compared to their counterparts who did not join, reported to socialize more frequently with a student of another race. If these students of color who joined were predominantly in race specific fraternities or sororities, one would expect them to socialize less with students of another race. In other words, those students of color who became Greek members were most likely in historically white Greek organizations. To further address this concern, only students who attended a predominantly white co-ed campus (non-HBCs) with a social Greek system were included in the sample.

While we can say with some confidence that students of color in the sample join traditionally white Greek organizations, it is unclear what "type" of fraternity or sorority they joined. Greek societies are organized along hierarchies of prestige on campus, usually determined by the *selectiveness* for membership. The organization or *house* with the most elevated prestige will attempt to maintain their social position by rigidly controlling membership to only "high status" individuals. In a racial order that perpetuates disparaging stereotypes, students of color are often viewed to possess lower social status than whites (West, 1991). Thus one would expect most students of color who are Greek members to be in less prestigious houses. Although students of color may be joining historically white Greek organizations, they may not be in the "top houses." However, this phenomenon is impossible to study using this data, but should be considered in the interpretation of the results.

Results

The findings indicate that Greek organizations remain predominantly "white social clubs." White students account for 94% of the Greek participants, while accounting for 91% of the students in the sample. Table 1 shows the results of the crosstab analysis that were conducted to determine the likelihood of participation. While the two groups of students reported very similar initial desire to participate as entering freshmen, white students are more likely to actually joined a sorority or fraternity. In contrast, students of color are more likely to over-predict their chances of actual participation. For example, 45.7% of the white students who predicted that they *had a good chance of participating* actually joined, whereas only 24.3% of their counterpart actually joined; a difference of 21.4%. Lastly, a correlation analysis reinforced this finding. Compared to students of color, white students more accurately predicted actual participation ($r=.28$ for whites vs. $r=.11$ for students of color). To develop a richer understanding of participants and the environmental conditions that foster participation, multiple regression analyses using the I-E-O technique was employed for white students and students of color.

White Students

The results of predicting Greek participation for white students are reported in Tables 2, 3 and 4. The Input variables that predict participation are listed in Table 2. A student's freshman estimate of whether he or she would join a social fraternity or sorority accounts for the most variance in predicting actual participation ($R^2=.08$). Other input variables account for 3 percent of the predictive variance.

Many entering freshmen characteristics are positively associated with joining a Greek organization. Drinking beer before entering college (at an age that is usually illegal in most states) and having had a major part in a play positively affect the chances of joining. Relative to their peers, white Greek members as entering freshmen, place more value on becoming an expert in finance/commerce, and support both the death penalty and the legalization of abortion. Moreover, they come from higher socio-economic backgrounds and rated themselves higher in leadership

qualities. Lastly, self ratings on Hedonism and intellectual ability are also associated with participation.

Other input characteristics are negatively associated with joining a Greek organization. Upon entering college, those white students who joined have lower SAT-verbal scores and are less likely to have worked. They also rated their political view as more conservative and are less likely than non-members to value writing original works. Lastly, choosing a career listed as "other" is a negative predictor of participation in a social fraternity or sorority.

When the 15 entering input variables are controlled, thirteen additional environmental variables enter the equation accounting for an additional 6 percent of the variance. Table 3 shows the Environmental variables that predict Greek participation for white students. An institution, as rated by its faculty, that emphasize resource/reputation and has racial conflict is associated with the increase of white student participation. In contrast, institutions with a faculty that is committed to social activism and that emphasize diversity is negatively associated with Greek participation. Likewise, a student body that is politically liberal, is less permissive, and is active in social issues, is related to a reduction in the rate of Greek membership. The campus racial make-up of the student population also affect participation. For example, a high proportion of Asian students decreases the likelihood that white students would join. Likewise a more racially diverse student population is negatively associated with joining a fraternity or sorority. In short, institutional commitment to diversity appear to have a negative effect on white student participation.

Other Environmental variables that are negatively associated with white student participation, after controlling for input characteristics, are: living at home during the freshman year, attending an institution that emphasize research, and a campus with a faculty that rated the general education positively. Conversely, Environmental variables that are positively associated with Greek participation include: a positive faculty relation with administration, a student oriented faculty, and a science oriented student body. Lastly, the percentage of female faculty has an indirect effect on participation.

It should be noted that some of the effects reported above are highly complex. The true effect of a variable on the dependent variable does not emerge until another variable is controlled in the regression equation. Astin (1991) calls this a *suppressor effect*. For example, a suppresser effect on the variable peer group permissiveness is observed (a BETA change of -.01 to .12) when the peer group political orientation variable enters the regression (Step 17). A similar effect on political orientation (a BETA change of -.08 to -.17) occurs when permissiveness enters the regression (Step 18). Thus, once the two variables are controlled, both variables' association with Greek participation increase dramatically. This is a result of the strong positive correlation between the two variables ($r=.75$). A suppresser effect suggests that the influence of each variable is masked by the other variable. Peer group general permissiveness alone does not carry a significant predictive weight, but in conjunction with political orientation, it greatly increases its positive association. This effect indicates that a politically conservative peer group that is also highly permissive, will have the strongest effect on white student participation.

Other suppresser effects are observed in the relationship between the following variables: institutional emphasis on research & institutional emphasis on reputation, mean faculty relation with administrations & faculty attitude toward general education, mean student orientation of faculty & mean faculty commitment to social activism, the percentage of Asian Americans, the diversity range, & diversity deviation. The combination of these variables have a stronger effect on white student participation in a Greek organization than when a variable in the combination acts alone. For example, an institution with a strong emphasis on both research and reputation has a stronger effect than an institution with only an emphasis on research.

Table 4 shows the Intermediate Outcome variables that predict Greek participation for white students. Because these variables were measured at the same time as the dependent variable, it is impossible to clearly establish any causal ordering among these variables. Despite this limitation, these variables are informative in that they reveal within college variations toward joining a Greek organization.

Nine Intermediate Outcome variables account for an additional 9 percent of the variance. Partying and playing sports highlight the concurrent activities white Greek members engage in while attending college. Compared to non-members, they have a greater tendency to spend time partying, drinking alcohol, exercising, playing intramural sports, and participating in student clubs, yet will less likely spend time demonstrating for social or political causes, discussing racial/ethnic issues, and watching television. Lastly, a lower GPA is associated with Greek participation. This suggests that Greek membership continue to foster the above activities, despite self-selection or the fact that many of the activities were already controlled in the input characteristics (drinking, hedonism, etc.).

Students of Color

Step-wise multiple regression analysis was also employed to assess the impact of various independent variables on participation in a Greek organization for students of color (see Table 5). Input variables account for 5 percent of the predictive variance. Similar to white students, a student's plan to join a fraternity or sorority, their self-perceived leadership ability and the previous year activity of drinking beer are strong positive predictors of actual Greek participation. Other positively associated input variables include African American ancestry and lettering in a high school sport. Those students of color who joined are also more likely than their peers to believe that "one can do little to change society."

When the six entering input variables are controlled, two additional Environmental variables enter the equation, accounting for an additional 2 percent of the variance. An institution where the faculty are politically liberal or where faculty view the general education in a positive light, is associated with a reduction in Greek membership among students of color. These conditions also reduce the propensity for white students to join a social fraternity or sorority.

Four Intermediate Outcome variables significantly predict participation, after controlling for Input and Environment variables. The hours per week students of color spend in student clubs and

spend partying are positively related to Greek participation, whereas the hours per week spent on hobbies is negatively related. Students of color who joined are also less likely than their non-member counterparts to view busing as "O.K. to achieve racial equality." These variables account for an additional 7 percent of the predictive variance.

Discussion

The results of the study suggest that social fraternities and sororities on historically white college and university campuses, have not out-grown their tradition as white social clubs. A student's race coupled with the campus racial climate influence Greek participation. Despite the abolishment of formal racial membership barriers, white students still over-represent membership in Greek lettered organizations. Differences in participation patterns between white students and students of color may result from either self-selection, informal membership barriers, or both.

While the above finding may be ambiguous, another finding indicates that racial conflict on campus either enhances white students' proclivity to join Greek societies or is enhanced by their participation. In other words, increased racial conflict on campus either encourages the "balkanization" of white students into Greek organizations (Astin, 1993; Duster, 1993) or is a consequence of increased participation that may heighten racial tension through increased insensitive acts. In either case, Greek societies' traditional support of "white privilege" seems to appeal to white students. Given the history of these organizations, white students may either find shelter in them during times of racial tension or use these clubs as vehicles to perpetuate racial intolerance.

In contrast, a campus that is committed to diversity has a negative effect on Greek participation. Institutions with a faculty that emphasize diversity or is committed to social activism is negatively associated with the rate of Greek participation among white students. Likewise the campus racial make-up of the student population also affects participation. A more racially diverse

student population has a negative effect on joining a fraternity or sorority. Similarly, high proportions of Asian students decrease the likelihood that white students will join. These findings suggest that the dynamics of race, especially as it pertains to the racial conditions of an institution, contribute to white students' participation in these complex social organizations.

Other results of predicting Greek participation for white students mirror that of Astin's (1993) findings. In general, the entering freshman characteristics for white students that increase the likelihood of participating in a Greek organization include a more conservative political view (except for view on abortion), higher SES background, hedonistic attitude, self-perceived leadership qualities, and interest in business.

Environmental variables continue to exhibit a great deal of influence even after all Input variables are controlled. To summarize, an environment that is racially diverse, less permissive, more liberal, committed to diversity and has a student body that exhibits social activism discourage white student participation in Greek organizations. Most interesting is the finding reported earlier, that faculty perceived racial conflict on campus is associated with white student participation in Greek organizations.

Another interesting set of findings (Intermediate Outcomes) identify Greek members' willingness to maintain the existing system or the *status quo*. The interests and concerns of white Greek members while in college reflect their disinterest in social issues and their fondness for physical stimulation. Compared to non-members, they will more likely spend time playing sports, partying, and drinking alcohol, while spending less time in campus demonstrations and in discussing racial/ethnic issues. The latter activities encourage social and political change, challenging the status quo, whereas the former activities focus on individual stimulation.

Race Relations

Despite the influence of race on the participation pattern of white students, race is no longer a formal barrier to obtaining membership. Thus, it is appropriate to ask: Under what conditions

are racial lines in Greek organizations more fluid? The findings suggest that acceptance of students of color into these historically white social groups, or these students proclivity to join such groups can be predicted by the student's view of society and their shared interests with white Greek members. This is not surprising since previous studies (Astin, 1993; Newcomb, 1962) have found that students are more likely to interact and form peer groups with individuals who are perceived to share a common set of beliefs, values, goals, behaviors and attitudes.

When common grounds are established, there is a greater probability that individuals will either de-emphasize or transcend racial differences (Gordon, 1954). Under these conditions, cross-racial interaction is less taxing because expectations and perceptions become more predictable (Triandis, 1988). In effect, students of color who joined social Greek organizations share similar interests with their white student counterparts; namely, both groups show interest in sports and partying. The findings show that these shared interests contribute to the propensity to participate in a Greek organization for both students of color and white students.

The student's view of society also influences participation. Students of color who joined a fraternity or sorority tend to believe that one can do little to change society and to reject busing for achieving racial equality. Taken together, these beliefs ostensibly disregards social gains that were advanced by Civil Rights. The policy of busing, for example, was struggled for and eventually enforced to correct racial injustice. Supporters of school and residential desegregation argue that these policies have elevated our nation toward greater racial equality. In contrast, conservative movements, such as the New Right, have assaulted busing as a threat to community (white communities) and family values (European culture), in an attempt to subvert the gains made by racial groups (Omi & Winant, 1986). Opposition to race based social programs like busing often suggests a conservative tendency, which according to critics, attempts to dismantle Civil Rights policies (Apple, 1993). By this standard, students of color in Greek organizations would be considered politically conservative. Similarly, white Greek members also reported politically conservative views.

The belief that individuals can do little to change society also reflects the shared values and beliefs between the two groups of Greek members. Obviously, individuals have done a great deal to affect social change, especially toward greater racial equality. By not recognizing these efforts or changes, it is safe to assume that such a person of color is neither informed about civil rights struggles nor involved in racial movements that attempt to address systematic discrimination. Instead, a person who holds this belief will probably also support the existing system or the status quo, since they do not believe that they possess self determination to make social changes. The support of the status quo is also shared by white Greek members. Subsequently, these students not only share similar interests with their white counterparts, but share similar values as well. Thus, it is not surprising that they are more inclined to join exclusionary social groups, despite the history of discrimination and racial exclusion of these organizations. Perhaps the strategy used by students of color who joined historically white fraternities and sororities can be described as integrationist or assimilationist (Berry, 1984; Gordon, 1964). The statement *if you can't beat them, join them*, best characterizes this strategy whereby members of the *minority group* (people of color) adopt the ideology and practices of the *majority group* (white Americans).

The two views on busing and social change when taken together, suggest that students of color who are Greek members not only share similar interests with their white counterparts, but also share similar values, ideology and political tendencies. The commonality between them enable racial lines to be transcended. However, the values shared by both groups of Greek members are not neutral; they privilege certain groups with certain backgrounds. For example, critics argue that mainstream fraternities and sororities support what might be considered a "conservative ideology." Progressive liberal scholars have vociferously attacked this ideology for undermining Civil Rights and the welfare state, which as they contend, ultimately enhances the position of economically privileged white Americans (Apple, 1993; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Omi & Winant, 1986; West, 1993). Since membership is selective, the process reproduces these values and beliefs within the organization. Although students of color break racial lines as a result of shared interests

and values, perhaps the greatest irony is that the ideology and practices they support are those that have historically excluded them from membership in these social clubs.

Additionally, similar environmental conditions that are associated with Greek participation among whites students, are also associated with the participation of students of color. An institution with a faculty who have a negative opinion of the general education and who are more conservative in their political views is positively related to Greek membership among students of color. Other Environmental variables that significantly predict white student participation are also similarly associated with predicting participation for students of color. Although these variables are not significant, they are worth mentioning: a liberal student climate (-), campus racial conflict (+), institutional emphasis on diversity (-), diversity of the student population (-), and social activism among students (-).

Racial Identity

To what extent do the findings inform us about racial identity? The findings indicate that students of color who joined historically white Greek organizations resemble their white student counterparts in that they share similar interests, values, and politically conservative tendencies. To the degree that they resemble white Greek members, they might be characterized as integrated or assimilated into "white America." Subsequently, these students of color may express, construct, and negotiate their "racial identity" differently from those students of color who are commonly portrayed in current literature (i.e., heroic icons or victims of racist practices and structures). Regardless of the term one chooses to describe these fraternity or sorority members, these students of color seem to share more in common with each other cross-racially than with those who have been typically regarded as *spokespersons* for their race (i.e., students involved in MEChA, Asian Pacific American Coalition, Black Student Union, etc.)—those who usually hold a more progressive liberal political orientation.

For better or for worse, the unique social position and location occupied by Greek members result from a strategy used by students of color to negotiate their way through college. Consequently, this particular group of students have a different understanding and outlook of their racial identity than those students of color who are involved in student organizations that support their racial or ethnic heritage. Since integrationist strategies or conservative views tend to be regarded as not "authentic," those people of color who support them are not recognized as representative of their *race* but viewed as "white-washed," "Uncle Toms," or "sell-outs" (West, 1993). Nevertheless, such perspectives, positions, or racial identity if you will, do exist, although they are often ignored in the research literature.

Therefore, this study supports the contention that racial identity cannot be thought of as fixed nor monolithic but should be considered fluid, multivocal, and in this particular case, even contradictory. It is obviously erroneous and absurd to think that we can predict political behavior or racial attitudes from assumptions about race, or that people with similar phenotypic features share similar cultural practices, values or beliefs. Students of color develop different strategies and positions, established through multiple experiences and relationships, that enable them to maneuver through a racially stratified society in which they have limited power. The merits of these strategies are undoubtedly questionable, yet the multiple strategies, positions, and locations should not be overlooked because they on the one hand, challenge our assumptions about differences between groups and on the other, highlight differences within a group (de-essentialize race). If we expect to establish new identities and collectivities that bridge conflicting interests and that bring about greater social justice, we must begin to challenge our assumptions about group differences and broaden our understanding of racial groups.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that race can be transcended or is *permeable*, both within and between racial groups. The fact that students of color and white students develop personal bonds through

formal peer groups such as Greek organizations suggests that racial differences can be transcended. The findings indicate that the foundation of these cross-racial social relationships, even under conditions that appear to privilege "whiteness," is based on shared values and commitments. However, transcending racial lines or improving cross racial relationships would be enhanced if the shared values and commitments neither privilege nor disadvantage any single group. If social fraternities and sororities are able to reinvent themselves in this manner, perhaps these organizations could be promising mechanisms for enhancing race relations. However, change from within these organizations does not seem forthcoming given the findings regarding the influence of racial dynamics on white student participation coupled with their alleged traditions and practices that undermine institutional efforts to reduce racial tension.

Lastly, students of color who are members of Greek organizations, occupy a unique social position and location. As a result, they have a different understanding and outlook on their racial identity than other students of color. This finding indicates that racial identity, even between individuals within the same racial category, is fluid, multivocal, and even contradictory. Thus, traditional methods of categorizing race, especially when examining secondary data sources, should be re-considered because they fail to capture the different racial identities, especially between those who are often categorized into the same *racial group*. If a shared goal among researchers is to eradicate racial strife, assumptions emphasizing differences between races, the lack of differences within races and our willingness to uphold these differences should be re-examined.

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Table 1. Differential predictions of Greek participation
for the 1985 freshman cohort, by
white students and students of color (SOC)

1985 prediction for joining greeks	Percentage of Actual Participation				%age differences between Whites and Nonwhites on actual greek participation
	Did not Participate		Participated		
	Whites (N=9878)	SOC (N=1058)	Whites (N=4285)	SOC (N=292)	
No Chance	92.1	88.7	7.9	11.3	-3.4
Little Chance	84.5	83.4	15.5	16.6	-1.1
Some Chance	71.4	77.2	28.6	22.8	5.8
Good Chance	54.3	75.7	45.7	24.3	21.4

Table 2. Inputs variables that predict Greek participation for White students on historically White campuses
(1985 Freshman Cohort, N=11810, $p < .001$)

Step	R	Variable	Simple	BETA After Step															
			r	1	2	3	...	15	16	17	18	...	32	33	34	35	...	41	
Input		Entering:																	
1	29	Plan to join greek	29	29	27	27		26	26	25	25		23	19	19	19		18	
2	30	Leader (typology score)	13	08	08	07		07	06	06	06		07	05	04	04		04	
3	31	Drank beer the last year	11	08	07	07		09	09	10	09		09	09	08	08		06	
4	31	View: abolish death penalty	-07	-07	-06	-06		-04	-04	-03	-03		-02	-03	-03	-02		-02	
5	32	Had outside work	-05	-06	-05	-05		-04	-03	-02	-02		-02	-02	-02	-02		-02	
6	32	Values writing original works	-05	-05	-05	-05		-04	-04	-03	-03		-03	-04	-03	-03		-03	
7	32	Socio-economic status	08	06	05	04		04	03	04	03		04	03	02	02		02	
8	32	Be expert in finance/commerce	07	06	05	04		03	03	03	03		03	03	02	02		02	
9	33	Liberal political view	-06	-05	-05	-06		-05	-05	-04	-04		-03	-03	-03	-03		-03	
10	33	Self rated intellectual ability	02	00	-04	-04		-03	-02	-02	-03		-03	-03	-04	-04		-03	
11	33	Major part in play	04	03	02	02		04	04	03	04		03	00	01	01		01	
12	33	View: legalize abortion	07	05	05	04		06	05	07	05		04	04	05	04		05	
13	33	Hedonist (typology score)	05	03	02	-06		-06	-06	-05	-05		-05	-03	-02	-02		-03	
14	33	SAT-verbal	-03	-04	-04	-04		-03	-04	-03	-04		-03	-04	-04	-04		-03	
15	34	Career group: Other	-04	-04	-04	-04		-03	-03	-03	-04		-03	-02	-02	-02		-02	

Table 3. Environment variables that predict Greek participation for White students on historically White campuses
(1985 Freshman Cohort, N=11810, p<.001)

Step	R	Variable	Simple	BETA After Step															
			r	1	2	3	...	15	16	17	18	...	32	33	34	35	...	41	
Envir.		Entering:																	
16	35	Plan live at home	-.12	-.10	-.10	-.10		-.09	-.09	-.09	-.09		-.07	-.05	-.04	-.04		-.03	
17	36	Liberal political orientation	-.10	-.08	-.08	-.09		-.09	-.08	-.08	-.17		-.12	-.11	-.11	-.11		-.11	
18	36	Peer mean: Permissiveness	.02	.01	.01	-.01		-.01	-.01	.12	.12		.05	.04	.04	.05		.04	
19	37	Inst. emphasis on research	-.01	-.03	-.03	-.04		-.05	-.04	-.02	-.07		-.12	-.11	-.11	-.10		-.11	
20	38	Inst. emphasis on reputation	.01	.07	.06	.06		.07	.07	.06	.04		.20	.18	.18	.18		.18	
21	38	Faculty rated racial conflict	.05	.03	.03	.02		.02	.02	.05	.02		.18	.16	.16	.16		.16	
22	39	Mean faculty relation w/admin	.01	.01	.01	.02		.03	.02	.02	.06		.12	.12	.12	.12		.12	
23	39	Faculty rated gen. ed. positively	-.04	-.04	-.04	-.03		-.03	-.03	-.04	-.01		-.15	-.15	-.15	-.15		-.15	
24	40	Inst. emphasis on diversity	-.06	-.05	-.05	-.06		-.05	-.06	-.02	-.03		-.07	-.07	-.07	-.07		-.07	
25	40	%age female faculty	-.01	-.01	.00	.00		.00	.01	.02	.04		.08	.07	.08	.08		.08	
26	40	Peer mean: Science Orientation	.01	.00	.00	.00		.00	.01	.01	-.01		.06	.05	.05	.05		.04	
27	40	Mean student orient of faculty	.00	.01	.01	.02		.02	.01	.00	.04		.21	.17	.17	.18		.17	
28	41	Mean faculty commit. to atvsm	-.06	-.04	-.04	-.04		-.04	-.04	-.05	-.01		-.07	-.06	-.06	-.06		-.06	
29	41	Peer mean: Social activism	-.08	-.08	-.08	-.08		-.07	-.08	-.06	-.04		-.06	-.05	-.06	-.05		-.04	
30	41	% of Asian American students	-.05	-.05	-.06	-.07		-.07	-.07	-.06	-.09		-.14	-.13	-.13	-.13		-.13	
31	41	Racial divsty of stud. pop/Range	-.02	-.02	-.03	-.03		-.03	-.02	-.01	-.03		.52	.48	.48	.48		.49	
32	42	Racial divsty of stud. pop/Deviatn.	-.02	-.02	-.03	-.03		-.03	-.02	-.02	-.03		-.44	-.40	-.39	-.40		-.40	

Table 4. Intermediate Outcomes that predict Greek participation for White students on historically White campuses
(1985 Freshman Cohort, N=11810, $p<.001$)

Step	R	Variable	Simple	BETA After Step															
			r	1	2	3	...	15	16	17	18	...	32	33	34	35	...	41	
Int. Out.		Entering:																	
33	50	Hrs/wk spent in student clubs	34	30	29	30		30	29	29	29		28	28	27	28		27	
34	50	Participated in Intramural sprts	16	15	14	13		12	11	11	11		11	07	07	07		08	
35	50	Participated in campus demonst.	-03	-03	-03	-04		-02	-03	-02	-02		-02	-06	-07	-07		-06	
36	51	Alcohol consumption	16	12	12	11		10	09	10	09		09	07	06	06		04	
37	51	Discussed racial/ethnic issues	-02	-03	-04	-04		-03	-03	-03	-03		-02	-05	-06	-04		-04	
38	51	Hrs/wk exercise or played sports	05	04	03	02		01	00	00	00		00	-01	-04	-04		-05	
39	51	College GPA	-06	-06	-06	-05		-04	-04	-03	-03		-03	-04	-04	-04		-04	
40	51	Hrs/wk watched TV	-01	-01	-01	-02		-03	-03	-03	-03		-03	-02	-02	-02		-04	
41	51	Hrs/wk spent partying	18	14	13	13		12	11	12	11		11	07	06	06		04	

Table 5. Predicting Greek participation for Students of Color
on historically white campuses
(1985 Freshman Cohort, N=1190, p<.05)

Step	R	Variable	Simple r	Simple											
				1	2	3	...	6	7	8	9	10	...	12	
Input		Entering:													
1	13	Plan to join greek	13	13	14	12		12	13	12	11	10		10	
2	17	Won varsity letter in sports during HS	10	11	11	08		06	05	05	05	05		04	
3	19	Leadership ability	13	11	09	09		09	09	09	06	07		07	
4	21	View: can do little to change society	07	08	08	08		08	08	08	08	08		08	
5	22	Drank beer the last year	11	10	08	08		09	09	09	10	09		06	
6	23	Race-black	08	08	07	06		07	06	06	05	07		07	
Envir.															
7	25	Mean faculty political view	-09	-10	-09	-09		-09	-09	-09	-09	-09		-09	
8	26	Faculty rated gen. ed. positively	-07	-07	-07	-07		-06	-07	-07	-07	-07		-06	
Int. Out.															
9	34	Hrs/wk spent in student clubs	24	23	23	22		22	22	22	22	23		21	
10	35	View: busing OK racial equality	-09	-08	-09	-10		-11	-10	-10	-10	-10		-10	
11	37	Hrs/wk spent partying	18	17	16	15		15	15	15	10	10		11	
12	37	Hrs/wk spent on hobbies	-05	-06	-06	-06		-06	-06	-06	-07	-07		-08	